



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

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*Agency of Human Services*

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Dear Colleague,

Eleven of Vermont's fourteen counties meet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's definition of endemic for Lyme disease – a county in which at least two confirmed cases have been acquired, or in which tick vectors are infected with *Borrelia burgdorferi*. Ten counties meet the criteria because of human cases, while Grand Isle County has *Ixodes scapularis* ticks that are known to be infected with *B. burgdorferi*. Limited data suggest that Franklin and Lamoille counties have Lyme disease activity, although there is insufficient data from these counties to label them as endemic. The Lyme disease status of Essex County is largely unknown.

While the risk of contracting Lyme disease in Vermont is lower than in other northeast states, Lyme disease should be considered in the differential diagnosis for patients with signs and symptoms consistent with *B. burgdorferi* infection. These include fatigue, headache, fever, lymphadenopathy, myalgia, arthralgia, and an erythema migrans (EM) rash. EM usually develops 7-10 days (range, 3-30 days) after a tick bite. An EM rash  $\geq 5$  cm in diameter is diagnostic for Lyme disease. Tick bite hypersensitivity reactions, which appear as erythematous lesions within 48 hours of a tick bite, are usually  $< 5$  cm in diameter and typically begin to disappear within 24-48 hours.

Laboratory testing should provide support for a clinical diagnosis of Lyme disease and should never be used as the sole basis for a Lyme disease diagnosis. Screening tests must be followed by the more specific Western immunoblot test. Testing can be arranged through a reference laboratory.

Persons who have been bitten by a tick should be monitored for signs and symptoms of Lyme disease for 30 days. Patients should be instructed to seek medical attention if an expanding erythematous rash or other symptoms of Lyme disease develop within one month of a tick bite.

Lyme disease is reportable to the Vermont Department of Health by calling 1-800-640-4374. Accurate diagnosis and reporting of Lyme disease will help us better understand the morbidity associated with this disease in Vermont.

Sincerely,

Cort Lohff, M.D., M.P.H.  
State Epidemiologist